

**BOARD OF REGENTS
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

WORK SESSION MINUTES

**Thursday, April 15, 2010
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

**The Rhode Island Department of Education – Shepard Building
5th Floor – Peter McWalters Conference Room
255 Westminster Street – Providence, RI 02903**

Attending: Flanders, Guida, Callahan, Shimberg, Forbes, Cano-Morales

The meeting convened at 11:40 a.m.

Commissioner's Comments

Budget Update - Commissioner Gist told the group that the House had enacted the FY 2010 revised budget and that the Senate voted to amend the House proposal to remove the re-amortization of the state's pension liability and proposed to achieve the savings using the rainy-day fund. The House Finance Committee's recommendation has been amended to eliminate the requirement for town-council approval of school-district collective-bargaining agreements and to restore \$6M in education aid. The additional aid provides a slightly larger cushion than the House Finance Committee version did for maintaining the Stabilization Fund maintenance of effort (MOE) provision. The budget is now back in negotiation between the House and Senate, and it is not clear when it will be reconsidered. Additionally, RIDE has been communicating its concerns to the State Budget Office and the Governor's staff related to the changes to education aid, the MOE statute, and the RIDE budget, based on the House Finance Committee's proposal. Chief of Operations Carolyn Dias gave an overview of the highlights of the FY 2010 revised budget. The Regents then discussed the status of the statewide efficiencies and the statewide purchasing agreements.

CTE Regulations – The Commissioner reported that RIDE is continuing to develop the embargoed career and technical education regulations. The current regulations are 20 years old and need to be dramatically revised to move away from a focus on vocational education and toward a focus on 21st-century career and technical training. They will focus on the integration of career and technical education within comprehensive high schools (rather than isolated in stand-alone centers) and will guarantee that all students are provided the opportunity to enroll in rigorous career-preparation and training coursework.

The proposed regulations have been developed and refined over the course of several years and reflect an alignment with emerging federal requirements that focus on program quality. As part of this work, RIDE convened a focus group of

superintendents, high-school principals, CTE principals/directors, and a representative of the Community College of Rhode Island to review and provide feedback on the embargoed regulations. The focus group raised important issues that fall into two major categories: simple changes and structural changes. The simple changes ensure clarity and precision of language and emphasize the alignment with the BEP and the high-school regulations; the structural changes propose major changes to the way career and technical education is organized in Rhode Island. The Commissioner told the Regents that RIDE has been rethinking the original timeline for the approval of the new CTE regulations. The Regents discussed the need to review the work already done to be sure that the regulations really do reflect the best interests of Rhode Island students. The approval date will be moved to summer or early fall.

Common Core

RIDE Chief of Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness MaryAnn Snider joined the Commissioner to speak about RIDE work on the Common Core. The DRAFT Common Core document has been sent to education constituents for review and comment; a “Literacy and Mathematics Leadership” Committee has been established and has reviewed the document; and the committee’s comments have been forwarded to the National Governors’ Association. RIDE has also been working with higher education to be sure that the teacher training and certification programs are aligned. The Regents discussion concerned how the Common Core will affect Rhode Island assessments. Rhode Island will also be joining the Achieve consortium to review how the Common Core, state assessments, and curriculum align.

Race to the Top Round 2

Commissioner Gist explained to the Regents that she would like to strengthen the Protocol for Interventions by converting it into regulation. She emphasized that, although it is not strictly necessary, converting the protocol to regulation would create a stronger link between existing PSI statutory language and federal grant language, which is otherwise voluntary based on the willingness of an LEA to apply for either a Title I 1003g grant (School Improvement Grant) or RTTT grant. As part of this process, RIDE will need to decide whether the protocol, as regulation, should apply to all schools or only those Title 1 schools that are subject to RTTT or Title 1003g requirements regarding persistently lowest-achieving schools. Given the timeline necessitated by the desire to strengthen the Rhode Island RTTT application, the Commissioner suggested that the Regents put the protocol out for public comment but not public hearing. The Administrative Procedures Act allows the Board to do so unless 25 individuals or a group consisting of at least 25 members requests a public hearing.

Charter Public School Update

The Commissioner reminded the Regents that, at their previous meeting, they asked that they be updated, in more detail, on how well the charter public schools are doing. She then gave the Regents some data for the 2009-10 school year:

- Total enrollment (for 2009-10): 3452 students;
- Lottery Request 2009: 3723 students;
- Students placed through lottery: 481 students (13% placement);
- Wait list :3242 students;
- Placement percentages ranged from 6% Highlander (675/42) and Times2 Academy (781/45) to 57% for Textron (136/78) and Beacon (107/61) .

She emphasized that the demand for charter public school access is high. The data indicate that at least a 100% increase in enrollment is possible should the wait list be eliminated. On average, this represents an increase of approximately 12-15 additional high-quality charter public schools or expanded charter public school sites. This increase would still keep the approved charter public school sites under the recently enacted 35-school cap.

The Commissioner then updated the Regents on the Charter Public School Grant, as follows:

The RIDE grant application focuses on:

- developing a system for the rigorous review and evaluation of charter public schools;
- increasing the number of high-quality charter public schools;
- providing start-up grants to newly approved charters for instructional programs, parental and community outreach, and the development of systems that will help ensure their success; and
- providing mini-grants to promote the dissemination of innovations and best practices within the R.I. Charter network and between charter and traditional schools.

The grant is highly competitive (only 6-10 grants awarded nationally), which is a change from previous years; the range of funding is \$1 million-\$15 million per year for three years, an average of \$8 million per year. The grant application is due on May 7, 2010.

Finally, the Commissioner gave the Regents an update on the status of the existing charter public schools, as follows:

Charter Public Schools with Preliminary Approval:

1. Trinity Academy (Providence)

- Has hired a program director and recruited and enrolled 84 students from Providence.

2. Greene School (Statewide)

-Close to hiring a director; has recruited and enrolled 34 students.

Both Trinity and Greene are working on their academic-program design; will be seeking final charter approval on June 3; and will submit project-readiness data by May 30. RIDE will review their final charter readiness and will submit recommendations to the Commissioner and the Board of Regents prior to June 3, 2010.

New Charter Applications -

1. *Reis Norton Academy* - Review team found the application to be lacking in substance; feedback was provided to the applicants and a follow-up meeting has been scheduled.
2. *Nurses Middle College* - Review team recommended that the application move forward; RIDE has conducted public hearings and will present conclusions to RIDE leadership; the estimated first-year budget is \$918,189.

Existing Charter Public Schools -

1. *CVS Highlander* - RIDE leadership has been discussing Highlander's application for re-approval and is in the process of clarifying the renewal process and timeline for action.
2. *Blackstone Valley Democracy Prep* - Seeking an expansion to operate in multiple locations under a single charter; would double its current enrollment; RIDE leadership has been in communication with both RIMA and BVDP about the details and implications of this request.
3. *NE Laborers/Cranston Construction Careers Academy* - Seeking approval to expand enrollment from 245 to 300.

Adjournment: With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.